

Meeting Date: July 19, 2007

Agenda Item No. 14

Agenda Item: Potential Options for Muzzleloader
Equipment Rules

Approved by: _____

Prepared by: Brad Compton

Background:

Based on numerous requests from sportsmen, the Idaho Fish & Game Commission conducted a review of big game hunting equipment rules in 2006. The review included Department staff input, guest experts, and input from sportsmen and sportsmen organizations. In January 2007, the Department recommended and the Commission adopted numerous changes to equipment rules, including the legal definition of a muzzleloader for muzzleloader-only hunts. With the exception of muzzleloader rules, rule changes were supported by a majority of sportsmen responding to statewide input opportunities. Public comment was equally divided between those supporting and those opposing a muzzleloader rule change.

Current muzzleloader rules prohibit the vast majority of in-line muzzleloaders, including those previously allowed and used by many Idaho muzzleloader hunters. This prohibition generated much public concern and comment, primarily from northern Idaho and out-of-state muzzleloader enthusiasts.

In March 2007, the Commission adopted a few short-range weapon seasons in northern Idaho to accommodate hunters desiring to retain use of their in-line muzzleloaders during late-season special weapon seasons. These short-range weapon seasons were implemented on a temporary basis until further review of muzzleloader equipment restrictions could be conducted.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

The Commission has full authority to establish methods of take, including legal hunting equipment rules.

Public Involvement Process:

Development and review of proposed equipment rule changes were conducted with extensive public involvement and comment. Opportunities for public input included the November Commission workshop, regional public meetings and open houses, a web-based survey, and Commission public hearings. Overall, the Department received input from over 4,000 sportsmen.

Staff Recommendation:

None. Staff will outline options, with anticipated outcomes, for a range of potential modifications to existing muzzleloader rules.

Justification:

Commitment by the Commission and Department to conduct further review of existing muzzleloader rules.